<number>8

<title>Ford as poet

<author>Ashley Chantler

<text>Ford Madox Ford's reputation as a major novelist is secure. His poetry, however, has been rather neglected. Richard Aldington, William Rose Benét, T.S. Eliot, Robert Lowell, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and W.B. Yeats, among many others, all wrote favourably of it, yet when Ford is mentioned in critical studies of early twentieth-century poetry, it is usually in relation to Pound and to the influence Ford's theories about poetry had on him. The impression these studies leave is that Ford's poems have been little read—and this is true. The individual volumes are all rare books only available to scholars in copyright libraries or special collections. In the U.S.A., not even Cornell University, the owner of the largest collection of Ford's manuscripts and letters, holds all the volumes. It was not until 1997, with the publication of Max Saunders' *Selected Poems*, that Ford's poetry became widely available, and this contains but a fraction of the total *opus*.

Between 1893 and 1936 Ford published eight individual collections, two *Collected Poems*, and a 126-page dramatic poem illustrated by Paul Nash, *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses*. He also published a pamphlet, illustrated by Percy Wyndham Lewis, of his war poem *Antwerp* (1915), which Eliot described as 'the only good poem I have met with on the subject of the war' (Eliot 1917: 151). Harold Monro's *Chapbook* devoted an issue to *A House* (March 1921), which won the 1921 *Poetry* magazine prize, an award conferred in previous years on H.D., John Gould Fletcher, and Robert Frost.

The studied nonchalance of Ford's statements about writing poetry probably contributed to this neglect. He often discussed, for example, the use of 'juxtapositions' to 'suggest emotions' (Ford 1914b: 19), a technique of 'rendering' (Ford 2002: 155) rather than 'telling' he had mastered by the 1910 volume, *Songs from London*. This technique was to

become closely linked to Pound's, to Imagism and Vorticism, yet of it Ford wrote, with typical self-deprecatory wit: '[f]or myself, I have been unable to do it; I am too old, perhaps, or was born too late—anything you like' (Ford 1914b: 19). Lowell recounts how Ford 'wrote poetry with his left hand—casually and even contemptuously' (Lowell 1966: xii), and in the preface to the 1914 *Collected Poems*, Ford states:

> <extract>the writing of verse hardly appears to me to be a matter of work: it is a process, as far as I am concerned, too uncontrollable. From time to time words in verse form have come into my head and I have written them down, quite powerlessly and without much interest, under the stress of certain emotions. And, as for knowing whether one or the other is good, bad or indifferent, I simply cannot begin to trust myself to make a selection.
>
> <source>(Ford 1914: 9)

<text>This statement is, it would seem, both true and untrue. It is probable that 'words in verse form' came into his mind and that he wrote them down quickly in a surge of inspiration, often driven in the early work by the musicality of the phrasing. The revisions contained in Ford's manuscripts and typescripts, however, suggest that what he published was not at all careless but the result of meticulous labour and an acute sensitivity to what is 'good, bad or indifferent'. The phraseology of the above ('from time to time', 'without much interest') and the impression Lowell received suggest an air of cultivated languor, Ford lulling his readers so that the cloudy brilliance of the poems surprise them more forcefully. But there is also, perhaps, the sense that there is more kudos to be gained, more 'style', in appearing to be a poet who captures the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' rather than one who has 'thought long and deeply' (Wordsworth 1984: 598) and, Prufrock-like, had time for revisions. A series of conflicting images thus emerges of Ford's poetic 'personality'. Is it self-effacing or pompous, lazy or meticulous, sentimental or objective?

It seems that scholars are reluctant to allow Ford the poet into the canon because he does not fit neatly into any of its categories. He was a *fin-de-siècle* poet with the weariness and burden of John Davidson, Ernest Dowson, and Lionel Johnson, yet captured his anxieties in poems that occasionally read like pastiches of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Alfred Tennyson, and the Pre-Raphaelites. He is a literary Impressionist who did not always write Impressionist poems; a *Des Imagistes* (1914) contributor who said that the Imagists were the 'children of my teaching' (Ford 2002: 178), but was never rigorously Imagist; a mordant satirist who published gentle poems to his children; a war poet whose collection of war poems is dominated by a poem not about the war; and a sentimental love poet sceptical of romantic love. Much has yet to be written to illuminate the complexity of Ford's poetic *oeuvre*.

<a>1893–1904

<text>*The Questions at the Well: With Sundry Other Verses for Notes of Music* (1893) was published under the pseudonym Fenil Haig and dedicated to Ford's soon-to-be wife, Elsie Martindale (they married in May 1894). The collection is split into two parts: 'The Questions at the Well and Other Poems' (four long poems); and 'The Verses for Notes of Music' (fifteen short lyrics). Reviewing the collection, Yeats noted:

> <extract>'Questions at the Well' is one of the few books of promise which come to a reviewer in a season; nor is the promise the less evident because one does not quite know what it promises. It would be a work of remarkable achievement as well if Mr. Fenil Haig had only staked and hedged his orchard about and been careful never to stray beyond the boundary. His apples of knowledge are of his own growing, but he has let them get mixed up with sticks and stones from over the way. In other words,

he is yet but little of an artist, for art is before all other things the finding and cleaving to one's own.

<source>(Yeats 1893: 221)

<text>Yeats's observation is valid: Ford had indeed yet to find his own voice. As Robert Hampson has written: 'Ford's early volumes of poetry […] can be read, in retrospect, as a process of freeing himself from [his Pre-Raphaelite] heritage—and, specifically, from the influence of Morris, Rossetti, Swinburne and Tennyson' (Hampson 1993: 94). In Pamela Bickley's essay 'Ford and Pre-Raphaelitism', there is a section on 'Ford's Pre-Raphaelite Poetry', but the connections between Ford and the Pre-Raphaelites, especially Christina Rossetti, about whom Ford wrote glowingly throughout his life (see Smith 1986), are still awaiting critical form.

In his essay, Hampson also writes that *The Questions at the Well* is 'very much juvenilia—youthful love poems and youthful meditations on death, conventional pieties expressed in conventional imagery' (Hampson 1993: 93). To some extent, this is true; see, for example, 'Hammock Song':

<poetry>Why should the world not know
That we love each other, dear?
Why should we trouble so
To think that the rest should hear?
[…]
And the leaves to their grave will go
In the chilly fall of the year,
So why should we trouble so
To think that the rest should hear?
For they can never know

How we love each other, dear.

<source>(Ford 1893: 51)

<text>But Hampson ignores three of the long poems: the brilliant ‘The Story of Simon Pierreauford’ and ‘Faith and Hope—Part of a Trilogy’, and the engagingly strange ‘The Land of Hopes’. I have written previously about the Paris-set ‘The Story of Simon Pierreauford’ (Chantler 2005); Yeats said that it ‘is a queer realistic idyll’ and ‘the best of [the] longer poems’ (Yeats 1893: 221). More can be written about it and the London-set ‘Faith and Hope’: they could, for example, be considered alongside the *fin-de-siècle* city poems of Davidson, Dowson, W.E. Henley, Johnson, and Arthur Symons. ‘The Land of Hopes’ is in need of close critical analysis: it is Ford’s most ambiguous poetic meditation on desire, melancholy, and death. Regarding the whole of *The Questions at the Well*, it is curious that Ford scholars have tended to ignore it, as it is here that he begins to write for the first time about the city and the country, love, yearning, hope, mortality, suicide, religious belief, unrest, unease, and uncertainty.

In literary criticism, the term ‘beautiful’ could be used more often. (Art critics seem less uneasy about it.) *Poems for Pictures: And for Notes of Music* (1900) and *The Face of the Night: A Second Series of Poems for Pictures* (1904), are some of Ford’s most beautiful love poems: tender, sincere (another term that is out of fashion), profound. This is from ‘Grey Matter’ (1904), a dialogue between two lovers discussing the writing of a ‘crabbèd, ancient, dried biologist’:

<poetry>*She.* Where shall I,

The woman, where shall you take part,

My poet? Where has either of us scope

In this dead-dawning century that lacks all faith,

All hope, all aim, and all the mystery

That comforteth. Since he victorious

With his cold vapours chills out you and me,

The woman and the poet?

He. Never, dear.

For you and I remain,

The woman and the poet. And soft rain

Still falls and still the crocus flames,

The blackbird calls. (Ford 1997: 23–4)

<text>Throughout his poetry career, Ford was drawn to verse dialogue and verse/song drama. In *The Questions at the Well*, for example, there is the short 'Song-Dialogue' (reprinted in *Poems for Pictures* as 'Song Dialogue'), 'In Contempt of Palmistry', and 'The Wind's Quest' (reprinted several times). In the two subsequent collections, there are much longer pieces, some with several characters: 'King Cophetua's Wooing' and 'A Masque of the Times o' Day' in *Poems for Pictures*; 'The Face of the Night: A Pastoral', 'The Mother: A Song-Drama', and 'Perseverance D'Amour' in *The Face of the Night*. In 1921, *The Chapbook* devoted an issue to *A House*, 'a spacious and leisurely dramatic poem' (Saunders 1996: II. 86) whose 'clarity […] makes it seem deceptively simple, distracting us from the originality of its masque-like or dream-like form, and the exquisite tonal effects by the variations in line-lengths' (Saunders 1997: xiii). Two years after *A House*, Ford published *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses: or a Short History of Poetry in Britain: Variety Entertainment in Four Acts: Words By Ford Madox Ford: Music By Several Popular Composers: With Harlequinade, Transformation Scene, Cinematograph Effects, and Many Other Novelties, As Well As Old and Tried Favourites* (1923). In 1931, the first published version of *Buckshee* included 'Auprès de ma Blonde', Ford's version of the popular seventeenth-century chanson, which opens:

<poetry>SHE: *Down in my father's garden sweet blooms the lilac tree,*

Down in my father's garden sweet blooms the lilac tree,

And all the birds of Heaven there nest in company.

HE: Where lieth my leman, blonde and warm and blonde is she

Where lieth my leman fine is it to be!

<source>(Ford 1997: 148)

<text>Scholars interested in illuminating these texts, and considering their connections to the work of, among others, Robert Browning, Franz Schubert, and Tennyson, should begin with the excellent essay '"Music for a While": Ford's Compositions for Voice and Piano' (1989) by Sondra J. Stang and Carl Smith (which Nathan Waddell treats in detail in this volume). The essay can also be read alongside several by Ford, particularly in relation to his 'verses for notes of music' and development as a poet (they are collected in the 2002 *Critical Essays*): 'The Evolution of a Lyric' (1899); 'The Collected Poems of Christina Rossetti' (1904); and 'A Literary Causerie: On Some Tendencies of Modern Verse' (1905). Also important are 'The Making of Modern Verse' (*Academy and Literature*, 1902) and the following chapters (they were first published as journal articles): 'Modern Poetry' in *The Critical Attitude* (1911); 'Gloom and the Poets' and 'Christina Rossetti and Pre-Raphaelite Love' in *Ancient Lights* (1911).

Several poems in *Poems for Pictures* have specific subtitles: 'St Æthelburga: For a Picture'; 'Gray: For a Picture' (see Skinner 2015: 111); and 'Beginnings: For Rossetti's First Painting'. The latter reminds those studying Ford to look not only at the connections between his early work and that of the Pre-Raphaelites (Dante Gabriel Rossetti, for example, wrote several sonnets for various artworks, including two for his first significant painting, *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1849)), but also to consider Ford's path-breaking biographies and monographs: *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work* (1896); *Rossetti: A Critical*

Essay on His Art (1902); *Hans Holbein the Younger: A Critical Monograph* (1905); and *The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: A Critical Monograph* (1907).

Paul Skinner has noted that Ford's early work:

<extract>is strongly marked by a sense of place: its context was overwhelmingly rural for a decade from the mid-1890s. Much of Ford's imagery is drawn from the country around Romney Marsh, showing a keen awareness of the weather, of the unremitting labours of agricultural workers, of trees and clouds and hedges and birds.

<source>(Skinner 2015: 110–11)

<text>Ford's 'sense of place'—'he was writing of what he knew at first-hand' (Skinner 2015: 112)—and his empathy with the rural poor led him to write what could be seen as his first important poems, among them 'Gray', 'The Song of the Women', and 'Auctioneer's Song' in *Poems for Pictures*, and 'From the Soil (Two Monologues)', 'The Mother', and 'Wisdom' in *The Face of the Night*. The second part of 'From the Soil', a monologue by a farmer who owns a small piece of land, opens:

<poetry>I wonder why we toiled upon the earth
From sunrise until sunset, dug and delved,
Crook-backed, cramp-fingered, making little marks
On the unmoving bosoms of the hills,
And nothing came of it. And other men
In the same places dug and delved and ended
As we have done; and other men just there
Shall do the self-same things until the end.
I wonder why we did it. …

<source>(Ford 1997: 27)

<text>This poem and some of those mentioned above are discussed in '"In This Dead-Dawning Century": Ford Madox Ford's Edwardian Poetry', which concludes thus: '[t]he poems discussed in this essay are unsentimental, political records of a specific time in British history and they should be placed in the anti-pastoral lineage that runs from Oliver Goldsmith, George Crabbe, John Clare and Blake to Ted Hughes and beyond' (Chantler 2013: 101). Related topics for future scholars include Ford's first- and third-person nature poems and their connections to the British pre-Romantics and early Romantics, but also to the troubadours and one of Ford's favourite poets, Heinrich Heine.

<a>1907–1914

<text>*From Inland and Other Poems* (1907) is a curious collection: fifteen of its twenty poems had been published previously in the first three poetry volumes and *Christina's Fairy Book* (1906). Three of the five new poems—'Two Making Music', 'Song', and 'A Suabian Legend' (listed in the contents as 'A Legend of Creation')—are rather unremarkable. 'The Portrait' is interesting as it is based on the Pre-Raphaelite painting *The Doubt: 'Can These Dry Bones Live?'* (1854–55) by Henry Alexander Bowler. The poem opens:

<poetry>She sits upon a tombstone in the shade,
One flake of sunlight falls between the leaves
Of quivering poplars, lights upon her hair,
Shot golden, and across her candid brow:
So, in this pleasant gloom she holds the eye:
Being life amid piled up remembrances
Of the tranquil dead.
One hand, dropped lightly down,

Rests on the words of a forgotten name […].

<source>(Ford 1997: 37–8)

<text>But what makes the collection important is the title poem. ‘From Inland’ was written in Germany after Ford had suffered a nervous breakdown (Moser 1980: 141); abroad, he was ‘tortured by insomnia, agoraphobia, panic attacks and sharp moods swings from brief moments of elation to longer stretches of depression’ (Stannard 2009: 136; see also Saunders 1996: I. 171–90). Thomas C. Moser writes that ‘From Inland’ ‘is about a tired, aged couple who will never again experience their early, happy love’, and that the poem can be read as an expression of Ford’s guilt about his affair with Mary Martindale, Elsie’s sister—a key cause, Moser suggests, for his illness (Moser 1980: 141). ‘From Inland’ is also Ford’s ‘first sustained attempt to put into poetic practice much that he saw in [Christina] Rossetti, but to also find his own voice, one that captures in poetry the unease of the contemporary self and gives “the mind of the time sincere frame and utterance”’ (Chantler 2009: 74; Ford 2002: 31):

<poetry>I dreamed that you and I were young
Once more, and by our old grey sea
Stood in the wind; but matins, sung
High in these wine-hills, wakened me.
I lay, half roused and seemed to hold
Once more beside our old, dear sea,
Your hand. I saw the primrose gold
Your hair had then and seemed to see
Your eyes, so child-like and so wise
Look down on me.
[…]
… This view!

Steep vineyards rising parched and brown

This weary stream: this weary town:

White convents on each hill-top! …

Dear

What would I give to climb our down

Where fresh wind hisses in each stalk […].

<source>(Ford 1997: 36)

<text>Ford captures in the poem the 'quiet voice going on talking':

<extract>I suppose that what I have been aiming at all my life is a literary form that will produce the effect of a quiet voice going on talking and talking, without much ejaculation, without the employment of any verbal strangeness—just quietly saying things.[1]

<source>(Ford 2002: 158)

<text>'From Inland' is 'an early example of Ford's literary Impressionism' (Chantler 2009: 76) that he had perfected by the time *Songs from London* appeared (1910)—see 'Views', for example, and 'Modern Love'—and *High Germany* (1912): 'The Starling', 'In the Train', 'Canzone à la Sonata (To [Ezra Pound])', 'In the Little Old Market-Place', and 'To All the Dead'. In his 1912 review of *High Germany*, Pound wrote that 'The Starling', 'In the Little Old Market-Place', and 'To All the Dead'

<extract>convey the author's mood, a mood grown of his own life, his own belief, not second-hand, or culled from books. They are true music. They are rare music. And the book is interesting […] because Mr Hueffer is searching […] for a vital something which has in too great a degree slipped out of modern poetry.

<source>(Lindberg-Seyersted 1982: 10)

<text>There has been some other fine writing on these poems (Sturgeon 1920; Wiesenfarth 1989; Saunders 1996; Skinner 2002), but the longer poems in *Songs from London* and *High Germany*, particularly ‘To All the Dead’, require further illumination. It would be fruitful if they were also considered in relation to Ford’s modernist fiction, especially *The Good Soldier* (1915).

Much has been written about Ford, Pound, and Imagism (see, for example, Schneidau 1969; Coffman 1972; Harmer 1975; Lindberg-Seyersted 1982; Saunders 1989/1990, 1996, 2013; Hampson 1993; Skinner 2002; Moody 2007; Carr 2009; and Robinson 2010) and I am not sure that there is much left to say about this creative relationship. More could be written, though, on a poem Pound admired (Lindberg-Seyersted 1982: 13–14), the long ‘Süssmund’s Address to an Unknown God (Adapted from the High German)’, which, as Skinner says, shows ‘a vigorous humour and satirical force with which Ford is not often credited’ (2015: 115). Its speaker is certainly not a ‘quiet voice’, though he does keep ‘going on’ (in *High Germany*, for nearly eight pages):

<poetry>My God, they say I have no bitterness!
Dear Unknown God, I gasp, I fade, I pine!
No bitterness! Have firs no turpentine?
If so, it’s true.
Because I do not go wandering round Piccadilly
Like an emasculated lily
In a low-necked flannel shirt beneath the rain.
(Is that what you’d do,
Oh God Unknown,
If you came down
To Piccadilly

And worried over London town?)

<source>(Ford 1997: 63)

<text>‘Süssmund’s Address’, along with all of the poems in *High Germany*, *Songs from London*, and *The Face of the Night*, four of the five new poems in *From Inland* (‘Two Making Music’ was omitted), and most of the poems in *Songs from London* and *The Questions at the Well*, were reprinted in *Collected Poems* (1914). The collection also contains Ford’s important preface, a version of which was published in *Poetry* as ‘Impressionism—Some Speculations’ (1913a; reprinted in Ford 1964; see also ‘The Poet’s Eye’ (1913b)). There is much here for future scholars to ponder; key statements include:

<extract>With regards to more speculative matters, I may say that for a quarter of a century I have kept before me one unflinching aim—to register my own times in terms of my own, and still more to urge those who are better poets and better prose-writers than myself to have the same aim.

<source>(Ford 1914: 13)

<extract>Modern life is so extraordinary, so hazy, so tenuous with, still, such definite and concrete spots in it that I am for ever on the look out for some poet who shall render it with all its values.

<source>(Ford 1914: 15)

<extract>[The] business of poetry is not sentimentalism so much as the putting of certain realities in certain aspects. The comfrey under the hedge, judged by these standards, is just a plant—but the ash-bucket at dawn is a symbol of poor humanity, of its aspirations, its romance, its ageing and its death.

<source>(Ford 1914: 17)

<extract>I would rather read a picture in verse of the emotions and environment of a Goodge Street anarchist than recapture what songs the sirens sang.

<source>(Ford 1914: 19)

<extract>[The] attempt to read Tennyson, Swinburne and Browning and Pope—in our teens—gave me and the friends I have mentioned, a settled dislike for poetry that we have never since quite got over. We seemed to get from them the idea that all great poets must of necessity write affectedly, at great length, with many superfluous words—that poetry, of necessity, was something boring and pretentious.

<source>(Ford 1914: 22)

<extract>It is the duty of the poet to reflect his own day as it appears to him, as it has impressed itself upon him. […] [The] main thing is […] the faithful rendering of the received impression.

<source>(Ford 1914: 26, 28)

<text>Reviewing the collection, Pound wrote: 'I find [Ford] significant and revolutionary because of his insistence upon clarity and precision, upon the prose tradition; in brief, upon efficient writing—even in verse' (Lindberg-Seyersted 1982: 21).

<a>1914–1918

<text>Regarding *On Heaven and Poems Written on Active Service* (1918), it is interesting and useful to note some dates (and places of composition), given that Ford enlisted in the summer of 1915 and was sent to France on 13 July 1916. At the end of that month, he was 'blown into the air by something' (Ford 2007: 175) and subsequently suffered amnesia and shell-shock (Saunders 1996: II.–4; see also Chantler and Hawkes 2015: 1–3). Ford was invalided home in early March 1917 (Saunders 1996: II. 28).

<list>{bul}'On Heaven': 'written […] during the early months of 1914' (Ford 1918: 5); Max Saunders' research supports this statement (Saunders 1996: I. 90 n.12).

{bul} ‘When the World Was in Building’ and ‘When the World Crumbled’: first published in *Outlook* (5 September 1914).

{bul} ‘That Exploit of Yours’: first published in *Outlook* (12 September 1914).

{bul}*Antwerp*: first published in *Outlook* (24 October 1914).

{bul} ‘The Old Houses of Flanders’: first published in *Blast* (July 1915).

{bul} ‘What the Orderly Dog Saw: A Winter Landscape’: dated ‘Cardiff Castle’ 12 December 1915 (Ford 1918: 32); first published in *Poetry* (March 1917).

{bul} ‘The Silver Music’: dated ‘Cardiff Castle’ 3 July 2016 (Ford 1918: 34); first published in *Poetry* (April 1918).

{bul}The poems in the appendix were ‘written in moments of leisure in the O.R. [Orderly Room] of No. I Garrison Coy., Welch Regt.’ on (and perhaps after) 3 July 1916 (Ford 1918: 10, 113).

{bul} ‘The Iron Music’: dated ‘Albert’ 22 July 1916 (Ford 1918: 36); first published in the *Westminster Gazette* (14 September 1916); on Ford at Albert, near Bécourt (referred to in the poem), see Saunders 1996: II. 1–2.

{bul} ‘A Solis Ortus Cardine’: dated ‘Ypres Salient’ 6 September 1916 (Ford 1918: 37); first published in the *Literary Digest* (5 October 1918).

{bul} ‘Albade’: dated ‘The Salient’ 7 September 1916 (Ford 1918: 41).

{bul} ‘Clair de Lune’: dated ‘Nieppe, near Plugstreet’ 17 September 1916 (Ford 1918: 45).

{bul} ‘One Day’s List’: dated ‘No. 2 Red Cross Hospital, Rouen’ 7 January 1917 (Ford 1918: 52); on Ford at the hospital, see Saunders 1996: II. 23–5.

{bul} ‘One Last Prayer’: dated 17 December 1917 (Ford’s 44th birthday) (Ford 1918: 54); first published in the *English Review* (April 2018).

{bul} ‘Regimental Records’: dated 18–21 December 1917 (Ford 1918: 57).

{bul} ‘Footsloggers’: dated 24 December 1917–1 January 1918 (Ford 1918: 76).

<text>There are, then, if Ford's dates are correct (and they seem to be), seven poems in the collection (excluding the 'rough products' in the appendix: Ford 1918: 10) that were written *during* active service, eleven *about* active service. The gap between writing 'One Day's List' and 'One Last Prayer' is poignant—and perhaps might be linked in critical terms with the avoidance of war in Ford's memoirs (see Boyd-Maunsell in this volume).

Regarding the war poems, the most useful critical writing for the researcher began with Bernard Bergonzi's *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War* (1965). Subsequent essential texts include: Saunders' biography (1996); Susan Swartzlander's '"Thus to Revisit or Thus to Revise-It": Ernest Hemingway, Defiant Disciple' (2007); Michael Copp's 'Ford Madox Ford: Impressions of War' (2011); Joseph Wiesenfarth's 'Death in the Wasteland: Ford, Wells, and Waugh' (2014); Christine Berberich's 'Ford and National Identity' (2015); and Andrew Frayn's 'Ford and the First World War' (2015). But the connections and differences between Ford's poems and those of, among others, Richard Aldington, Edmund Blunden, Ivor Gurney, Wilfred Owen, Herbert Read, Isaac Rosenberg, Siegfried Sassoon, and Edward Thomas remain under-explored.

Similar to Brita Lindberg-Seyersted's *Pound/Ford* (1982), a valuable collection could be published of Ford's war essays, poems, and letters (by and to him), placed in chronological order of composition, ranging from 4 August 1914 to, say, 14 October 1923, when Ford wrote to H.G. Wells: 'I am as happy as it is decent to be […]. I've got over the nerve tangle of the war and feel able at last really to write again—which I never thought I should do' (Ford 1965: 154). At the time of the letter, Ford had begun writing *Some Do Not…* (1924). As well as being useful for Ford scholars and those of the period more widely, the collection would help students who are studying late-twentieth-century novels such as Pat Barker's *Regeneration* (1991) and Sebastian Faulks's *Birdsong* (1993): it would help them contextualise and understand the writers' representation of life in and after the trenches.

‘On Heaven’ was written at Violent Hunt’s (his partner’s) insistence:

<extract>I had said pettishly:

‘You say you believe in a heaven; I wish you’d write one for me. I want no beauty; I want no damned optimism; I want just a plain, workaday heaven that I can go to some day and enjoy it when I’m there.’

<source>(Hunt 1926: 216)

<text>Regarding the poem, Ford wrote:

<extract>It expresses what, quaintly enough, is my belief of what Heaven will be like—or rather of what Heaven is. If it is a materialist’s Heaven I can’t help it. I suppose I am a materialist.… But that is not what I set out to say.

<source>(Ford 1918: 5–6)

<text>Hunt herself, meanwhile, would later write that: ‘[m]y Poem [*sic*] turned out as profane a piece of work as Grimm’s *Kinder Märchen* or the Bible itself at times. The introduction of earthly love into heaven could not but be profane according to the usual canons’ (Hunt 1926: 218). As Joseph Wiesenfarth has said:

<extract>Today we can read “On Heaven” (along with, say, the work of D.H. Lawrence, whom Ford was the first to publish) as an important early instance of sexual frankness in literature, an anticipation of the liberation that was to come.

<source>(Wiesenfarth 1989: 258).

<text>The most detailed elucidation of the poem is by Sara Haslam in *Fragmenting Modernism: Ford Madox Ford, the Novel and the Great War* (2002: 167–78). Other interesting critical writing includes that by Derek Stanford (1989/1900), Joseph Wiesenfarth (2005), Dennis Brown (2006), and Colin Edwards (2007). Saunders discusses the ‘dual address of the poem’: Ford wrote it not just for Hunt, but also Bridget Patmore (1996: I. 397).

<a>1921–1936

<text>As mentioned above, Harold Monro devoted an issue of *The Chapbook* to *A House* (March 1921), and 1923 saw the publication of *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses*. The most notable critical writing on *A House* is by Saunders (1996: II. 86–91); on *Mister Bosphorus*, see Colin Edwards's 'City Burlesque: The Pleasures of Paranoia in Ford's *Mister Bosphorus and the Muses*' (2005) and Robert E. McDonough's '*Mister Bosphorus and the Muses*: History and Representation in Ford's Modern Poem' (2004). Skinner's astute summarisation should also be acknowledged; he notes that:

> <extract>*Mister Bosphorus* responded to both T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and Pound's early cantos. It highlighted and exaggerated the formal features of the leading modernists' work, including Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) […], querying their frequent recourse to mythology and copious referencing of earlier literary works. Several characters recur in other guises, underlining the theme of disguise and transformation, while the powerfully rendered contrast between the Northern and Southern Muses reflects what became a major opposition in Ford's later writing, the warm and life-giving south (primarily Provence) as against a north which he characterised as cold, militaristic and damagingly receptive to mass production and consumer capitalism. <source>(Skinner 2015: 118)

<text>The connections Skinner suggests—between the poem, other modernists' writing, and Ford's 'later writing'—have yet to be explored in detail.

Ford's thirty-eight-page *New Poems* (1927) reprints *A House* along with several minor poems. Without *A House*, the volume might be ignored, but it does include 'Auprès de ma Blonde' (quoted above), which Ford incorporated into the 1931 version of *Buckshee*, and then excluded from the 1936 version in *Collected Poems*. *Buckshee* is Ford's late masterpiece. It represents 'a climax, a culmination of more than thirty years as a published

poet. The sequence could be seen almost as an anthology, a careful gathering of Fordian styles, forms and effects' (Skinner 2015: 119). There is some very good writing on the sequence, particularly Frank MacShane's in *The Life and Work of Ford Madox Ford* (1965: 235–7) and Wiesenfarth's 'Coda to the City' (2005), but only a stanza-by-stanza close reading would properly illuminate its complexity and brilliance.

In a brief article, MacShane notes that *Buckshee* has much in common 'with later poems like Williams' *Paterson* and Lowell's *Life Studies*' (MacShane 1967: 770; see also MacGowan 2007). Given the 'sexual frankness' of 'On Heaven', the honest autobiography (at times slightly uncomfortable, at others profoundly moving) of *Buckshee* (Maxwell 2014; Saunders 1996: II. 370–3), and Ford's influence on Robert Lowell (see below; Lowell also wrote a foreword for a single-volume edition of *Buckshee* (1966)), there is more work to be done on Ford's connections to mid-twentieth-century American poetry in general and the emergence of confessional poetry in particular.

<a>Future research

<text>As well as the critical writing mentioned above, original research projects on Ford's poetry could include: his poems for children; his poetic translations; Ford and the troubadours; and Ford's critical and theoretical writing on poetry (the evolution and influence of his thinking have yet to be fully clarified). There is also scope for further consideration of Ford, Basil Bunting (he edited Ford's first *Selected Poems* (1971)), and the 'documentary tradition' (see Bunting 1999; Edwards 2007; Kenner 1972; Price 2010; Skinner 2015).

In 2012, I published 'Robert Lowell on Ford Madox Ford' (2012), a collection, in chronological order, of Lowell's statements and poems about Ford. It included 'Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939)' from *Life Studies* (1959) and 'Ford Madox Ford' from *Notebook 1967–68*

(1969; reprinted in *Notebook* (1970)), a revised version of which Lowell included in *History* (1973). In *History* is also 'Ford Madox Ford and Others'. The chapter concluded:

> <extract>In 1939, two years after he met Lowell at the cocktail party in Boston and suggested to the aspiring poet that he 'Come and see' him, Ford, the 'great master', 'the old master', the 'kind man' with 'a great heart', died. He died knowing that he had had an influence, in various ways, on the lives and work of numerous authors, and that some American poets such as Ezra Pound and Allen Tate had already written poems about him. He died not knowing his influence on Lowell; nor could he have known the extent to which he would later figure in poems by other important American poets as well, such as William Carlos Williams, e.e. cummings, and Charles Olson.
>
> <source>(Chantler 2012: 245)

<text>As well as the authors mentioned above, there are poems about Ford, or that mention Ford, by Richard Aldington, F.S. Flint, and James Joyce. A collection and an essay in honour of Ford the poet, critic, theorist, editor, and mentor is, like the *Complete Poems*, overdue. As Max Saunders noted in 1997: '[t]hat a major modernist such as Ford still needs a *Complete Poems* is something of a scandal' (xi).

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[1] Dowell’s imagined ‘talking cure’ is one clear demonstration in *The Good Soldier*, which was published a year after the essay from which this extract comes.